THE LIFE OF

THE REV. DR. GEORGE WILLIAMSON FINLEY

1838 – 1909

Compiled by his great-grandson

The Rev. Dr. John Montgomery Irvine, IV

2004

CARREL LOA
For Library U
only!

Gift of the Author

The William Smith Morton Library
Union Theological Seminary
& Presbyterian School of Christian Education
Richmond, Virginia

*
+
MI
1.9
F513
I

The Life of the Rev. Dr. George Williamson Finley, 1838-1909

By his great-grandson, John Montgomery Irvine, IV

George Williamson Finley was arguably the most illustrious member of his family in the last five or six generations. His accomplishments and character were outstanding enough that his family, already marked (as he was) by a keen interest in genealogy and history, saved many documents that he wrote or that others wrote about him, in various files and scrapbooks. I have been privileged that much of this material has, over the years, come into my hands. Fascinated by his life, I have sought to structure this material in a coherent fashion in this paper, for the benefit of researchers and family members, and members of the churches which he served. This paper is subject to expansion or revision as further materials may come to light.

1. Early years

He was born on December 1, 1838, near Milton, Caswell County, North Carolina, just south of the Virginia-North Carolina line, at the home of his mother's parents, "Melrose." His father was Augustus Clement Finley I, who was originally from Rockbridge County, Virginia, and worked as a banker first in Milton and then in Clarksville, Mecklenburg County, Virginia. His mother was Anne Edwards Williamson Finley, daughter of George Williamson and his first wife, Rebecca Slade Lea.

George was educated in Clarksville at the schools taught in the town by the Rev. Daniel G. Doak, Robert Logan, and others; and later at the Dan River Academy at Yanceyville, Caswell County, NC. He made his profession of faith as a Christian while there, during his 16th year.

An intriguing and forward-pointing story from his childhood years was printed many years later in the Earnest Worker, a church paper published by the Presbyterian Committee of Publication in Richmond, VA, and copied in the Palmetto Leaf, publication of the State School for the Deaf and Blind in Cedar Springs near Spartanburg, SC, where his daughter Ruth worked for much of her life. It reads:

> "The writer recalls an incident told by Rev. G. W. Finley, D.D., of sainted memory. When he was a boy his grandmother [Ruth Irvine] Finley, a woman of notably pious character, made a bargain with him in which he was to memorize the Shorter Catechism and recite it to her. And that meant to know it word for word and letter for letter—for and in consideration of the gift to him of one silver dollar, 'which in those days,' as he said, 'looked to me as big as a cart wheel.' After many trials and tribulations young George Finley completed the task to his grandmother's satisfaction and the silver dollar was duly delivered into his eager hands. And then he went out into the fields some distance from the house with his old muzzle-loading shotgun. He poured a charge of powder in each barrel, tore up the catechism in equal parts, and rammed one-half of it into each barrel on top of the powder as wadding. Then putting the caps on the nipples, he fired both barrels and said, 'Good-bye, catechism! I am done with you.' 'But,' he added as he told the incident, 'the catechism was not done with me! It has been in my mind and influenced my character and thinking to this good hour.'"

He attended Hampden-Sydney College, some 55 miles north of Clarksville, in 1855, but either he didn't apply himself to his studies or his behavior was too rambunctious, or both, for he was dismissed from the college the next year. (One of his descendants, Frances Tynes West, has written that he burned a professor in effigy.) A letter from his father to him dated May 5, 1856 reads in part:

Dear Son George

We received tonight your Reports for March and April – the former was tolerably good but the latter was the worst we have ever received. It was unexpected and mortifying to us – your Mother cried over it – well don't let this discourage you – "pick up your flint and try again" – you can do better if you try. I fear that you have not been studying as you should have done and are tired of the place. You must not be so fond of change – "A rolling stone gathers no moss". I can't think of your coming home until the end of the Session; try and regain all you possibly can from now until then – set in with a determined resolution to do so – that is the way I succeeded in more instances than one. Your letter to your sister was also rec'd tonight….From that letter you too are mortified and disheartened; and ask us not "to scold you too much" and admit that you deserve some. I don't want to scold but feel hurt at the reports and at the letter that you did not stand your examination as you ought to have done. Perhaps it may be of service hereafter to you not to neglect your studies – but to stimulate you to greater exertions and diligence….Mr. Daniel was at the College Church Sunday before last but did not see you – heard you were there – and likewise that you were a considerable "ladies' man" – this may possibly account for bad examination….

Your Father A.C.F.

Thanks to some helpful friends (or relatives) of his father back in his earlier home in Rockbridge County, George was able to enroll that same year in Washington College (later Washington and Lee College, now University) in Lexington, Virginia, from which he graduated in 1858. He returned home to Clarksville and became a discount clerk in the bank, and within a few months he was the bank's manager (his father died on Christmas Day that year). In 1859 he was ordained as a Deacon in the Clarksville Presbyterian Church. Family documents state he was "...in person 5 ft. 10 in. in height, weight 170 lbs., dark hair, eyes and complexion."

On May 4, 1859, he married Margaret Elizabeth Booker (1840-1905), of Charlotte County. She was the daughter of John Booker and Lucilla Stanley Elliott. Of this union there were born 14 children, 11 of which lived past early childhood—not a bad percentage for that era. At his death he left nine surviving children.

2. Wartime service: first, with the 14th Virginia Infantry

The War Between the States was fast approaching and George was already showing his leadership qualities. Militia companies were being raised all over the South, financed by leading citizens of means such as his father, and he likely had a large part in organizing a unit which historian William A. Young Jr. termed "Captain George Finley's Company Clarksville Blues." His company elected him captain and that unit was enrolled on May 12, 1861 in the Confederate Army as Company E of the 14th Virginia Infantry Regiment under the command of Col. James Gregory Hodges. He served with that unit on the James River defenses at Jamestown Island, Mulberry Island, and Lands End. At Lands End he was put with his company and a section of the 3rd Richmond

Howitzers in command of the water battery; during the winter they were also given a field battery.

In March 1862 he was ordered to relinquish the field battery, and accompanied his regiment to Suffolk, Virginia. There the Regiment was reorganized and he was appointed Adjutant. He would not go along with an attempt to change his company from infantry to artillery, and in the reorganization he was not re-elected captain of his unit. As Adjutant he was with his regiment as a part of Armistead's brigade in the battles of Seven Pines and Malvern Hill, besides several skirmishes in front of Richmond. He accompanied the Regiment on the Maryland Campaign and with other troops held, under fire, the river at Warrenton Springs while General Jackson executed his flank movement on General Pope. He was held as a reserve, but under hot fire, close behind the engaged troops all the evening of the last day's battle at Manassas. He was with the Brigade at the investment of Harper's Ferry on the Maryland side when that post was captured, but sick and under the care of the surgeon. He attempted to march with the command to Sharpsburg, but was disabled by sickness, and did not cross the river with the Regiment. He remained with the Regiment until it reached Culpeper Court House.

At this point (November 10, 1862) he was called home by order of the civil court to help settle his father's complex estate on behalf of his widowed mother. He resigned his adjutancy and was, for now, exempt from military service under Confederate law. He and his wife "Mag" had a glad reunion. Their firstborn, a son named for his father, had died a few days after birth in December 1860 before Finley left for service. Their second child, Nannie Edwards Finley (my maternal grandmother), was born in October after he had left home in May 1861.

3. Wartime service: second, with the 56th Virginia Infantry regiment

With his strong sense of duty, though, he returned to the fray as soon as he could—but with a different unit, although it was another unit raised in Clarksville. His new unit was Company K, 56th Virginia Infantry Regiment, commanded by Colonel William Dabney Stuart. This unit was a part of Garnett's Brigade, Pickett's Division, in the Army of Northern Virginia. His new unit had been sent south to near Tarboro, NC, when he joined it. He was elected Junior Second Lieutenant by his unit, and immediately promoted to First Lieutenant. Owing to the ill health of the Captain, Nathaniel A. Flournoy, Finley was generally in command of the company. He was with it for the investment of "Little" Washington, NC, and while there was frequently under fire as support to the batteries. He accompanied the Command to Suffolk, VA, and participated in the siege of that place under General Longstreet. His unit rejoined the Army of Northern Virginia after the battle of Chancellorsville in May 1863. Just before the Gettysburg Campaign, he was detailed by General Garnett as Inspector-General on his Staff and sent back home for a mount. Obviously George Williamson Finley's good qualities commended him to his superior officers, who kept calling him to higher duties on their staffs.

When he reported back for duty he found that General Lee had issued an order requiring all of his Brigadier Generals to be their own Inspector-Generals, so he was remanded to his unit. But General Garnett applied to the War Department for permission to commission him in order to assign Finley to duty as a permanent member of Garnett's staff. While awaiting the disposition of that request, he moved with the

command on the Pennsylvania Campaign. At Chambersburg Finley served as Adjutant-General to Colonel Stuart, who was in command of the town. At Gettysburg, at noon on the 3rd of July, Finley was in command of Company K and on the far left of Pickett's Division as it prepared for the great assault on Cemetery Hill that was to go down in history as "the high water mark of the Confederacy." Since the enemy armies had battled to a draw for a day and a half, Lee had decided to risk everything on one grand charge at the center of the Union position. That lay three quarters of a mile across a large field of grain that sloped gently from both sides down to Emmetsburg Road—quite out in the open.

At noon on this broiling hot day, the Confederate troops moved, crouched and with flags folded so as not to be seen by the enemy, to the edge of Spangler's Woods. Just behind a battery of cannon, the men lay down in a line in the sun in the tall grass and waited, the sun beating down upon them. At 1:00 Confederate cannon unleashed a mighty barrage against Union positions atop Cemetery Ridge, and Union guns responded in kind. For two hours this barrage continued. Finley later said this was the most terrific cannonade any of the men in his unit had ever experienced. Artillery fire killed and wounded some of his men; the ground shook, and in the heat canteens were drained of their water, but officers would not allow any men to go back for more water.

At 3:00 the cannonading stopped. As the smoke drifted away the command to move forward was given to the infantry. The troops had been instructed to march forward at an even pace, silently, closing up their ranks as any fell, maintaining their line as if they were on dress parade. Union muskets positioned along the Emmitsburg Road opened fire, and the Union cannon on Cemetery Ridge opened fire again. Yet worse, cannon on Little Round Top, to the right, joined in, and they were in position to enfilade the Confederate lines. Still the Southern soldiers swept on, maintaining their discipline, bayonets ready. Finley's company was headed for a stone wall which ran below the crest of Cemetery Ridge, and angled back up the ridge at a clump of trees—known ever since as "Bloody Angle." Finley wrote later, "…one company, a little to my right, numbering 35 or 40 men, was almost swept, to a man, from the line by a single shell." His own company was being decimated. Finley later said, "Men were falling all around us and cannon and muskets were raining death upon us. The 56th was being torn to pieces, but the men never faltered or wavered. They kept coming in strict formation. On and up the slope toward the stone wall the regiment…steadily swept, without a sound or a shot, save as the men would clamor to be allowed to return the fire that was being poured into them."

The Federal troops along the Emmitsburg Road fell back and the long gray line marched on silently through hellish fire. Finally, when they were about 100 yards from the stone wall, a junior officer gave them the command to fire, and freed them from silence at last. Instantly there arose a great and long Rebel Yell, descendant of the ancient battle cry of their Celtic ancestors from Scotland and Ireland. After loosing their first volley upon the Yankees what was left of the 56th Infantry charged the stone wall on the run with their bayonets. There were two brass Napoleon guns loaded with canister—like giant shotguns, lethal at close range—behind the wall. When the Confederates were about 150 feet away, the gunners pulled their lanyards, and cut down a swath 50 feet wide in the ranks. Finley said, "They fired their last shots full in our faces, and so close that…I felt distinctly the flame of the explosion." Colonel Stuart had fallen wounded in the middle of the field earlier in the charge; Captain James C. Wyant of Company H was now commanding the 56th; he was struck in the forehead by a bullet

and fell in front of the wall. But men of the 56th, including Finley, were now at the wall, firing over it, and Yankee soldiers were fleeing before them. Federal officers had many reserves to throw into the fray, and soon troops of the 72nd Pennsylvania came charging over the top of Cemetery Ridge just as Confederate General Garnett rode up on his horse. A rifle ball struck Garnett in the forehead and he tumbled off his horse dead. The soldiers on both sides fired several rounds and the Federals withdrew behind the hill.

In later years Finley gave his memories of that dread hour to the Stonewall Camp, a gathering of Confederate veterans:

"It was about 5 o'clock in the afternoon of July 3rd, 1863, the afternoon of an exceedingly hot day—hot in more senses than of the word than one, that there came a lull in the battle. We had carried the enemy's line along the fence. General Armistead with his hat on the point of his sword had leaped the low rock fence which marked the line, and we had gone beyond the 'bloody angle' when the lull came. We were looking behind for the supports that never came. The enemy were massing on both sides of us and pouring in their fire; there was no support and there was nothing to do but to surrender, and we surrendered. As we did so I saw a young man, a mere youth, who was still fighting and who was surrounded by a half dozen Federal soldiers. I ran to him and getting between him and his assailants, I called to him to throw down his gun. He did so, and coming to my side burst into tears. What could not a hundred thousand men like that have done? The first thing I did after the surrender was to go to where I had seen General Armistead. I found him lying in a distorted position near the cannon on which he had laid his hand in victory, just before he was shot down. His eyes were rolled back and I thought he was dead, but I heard afterwards that he did not die until away in the night, and I have always regretted that I did not stay with him longer.

"In a few minutes more we were startled by receiving the fire of our own artillery—every old soldier knows what effect that has; to have his own people firing on him. Our men started to run out of the way. A Federal general, Patrick, who was Provost Marshal of Richmond after its fall, rode up and cried out, "What are you fellows running for? Stand your ground!" This was enough for our men; to be taunted by the enemy settled it; and they all stood still and took the fire. I have never heard what this artillery firing was for, unless it was to support Wilcox's futile assault. You would be astonished to know the hospitality with which we were received by the enemy, and how many of them offered to take us to the rear to get out of fire themselves. It was 'This way, gentlemen, I'll take you to the rear' from scores of them. But we soon saw what was the matter. There was a line of cavalrymen and infantry back of their lines using their sabers, guns and big whips and driving back to the front those Federals who trying to get to the rear—literally lashing them up to their duty."

[In fairness, it should be noted that all along the line certain Confederates had orders to shoot any of their number who turned and ran to the rear during the advance of Pickett's charge across that vast field.]

Finley said elsewhere of this moment, "We were in plain view of the Federal officers and they saw that we were but few in numbers and were well nigh exhausted by what we had already accomplished. The death of General Garnett and the fall of General Armistead left us on that part of the line without an officer above the grade of captain." Indeed, some Confederate officers and men were retreating back down across the field. But Finley wrote, "The men who had begun to fall back seemed to be dropping as they ran, like leaves." In all this hail of fire, indeed through all the battles he participated in during the war, Finley was never wounded.

I have in my possession a copy of two pages concerning Finley's participation in the battle of Gettysburg written by his daughter Martha "Pattie" Finley White (Mrs.William

Chester White); it is page 13 [and 14?] of a longer document that I have not seen. The concluding paragraph reads,

Capt. H. Clay Michie of Charlottesville Va. told me (Pattie Finley White) that he saw my father (G. W. Finley), after he crossed over the stone wall at Gettysburg, stand amid the shot and shell and shake his head as he saw the hopelessness of the situation. He said he told my father that he knew his life was spared for some good purpose. Captain Michie went over the wall too – he told me when he saw George Finley shake his head he did not go any further – it was no place for him. [One wonders if the verbal statement about Finley's life being spared was made then, or in later years, in retrospect, when these heroes of that battle who had survived were together again at Confederate Veterans' gatherings, at which Finley was often the orator of the day.]

A clipping from the [Staunton?] News-Leader dated 21 September 1932, entitled "High Tide at Gettysburg," reads as follows:

"Mrs. Lula Moffett, who makes her home with her sister, Mrs. William C. White, at Churchville, recently discovered in a scrapbook a clipping of the poem, "High Tide at Gettysburg."

"At the bottom of the clipping had been written by the Rev. Dr. George W. Finley, father of Mrs. Moffett, Mrs. White, and Mrs. A. L. Tynes, this comment: "(The author) alluded to a remark of mine made to a Tennessee captain at the stone fence at the Bloody Angle, during the battle, and which has passed into history."

"Finley served as a captain in Pickett's division, and was one of the few Confederates who got across the stone fence. He was captured in that battle and held a prisoner until near the end of the war.

"After the war, he studied for the ministry, and one of his churches in this section of the state was Tinkling Spring Presbyterian.

"Dr. Finley's comment was especially directed toward the sixth verse of the poem, which follows [with a few typographical errors corrected]:

HIGH TIDE AT GETTYSBURG

A cloud possessed the hollow field,
The gathering battle's smoky shield,
Athwart the gloom the lightning flashed,
And through the cloud some horsemen dashed,
And from the heights the thunder pealed.

Then at the brief command of Lee,
Moved out that matchless infantry,
With Pickett leading grandly down
To rush against the roaring crown
Of those dread knights of destiny.

Far heard above the angry guns,
A cry across the tumult runs—
The voice that rang through Shiloh's woods
And Chickamaugas' solitudes
The fierce South cheering on her sons.

Ah! How the withering tempest blew
Against the front of Pettigrew;

A hamsin wind that scorched and singed,
Like that infernal flame that fringed
The British squares at Waterloo.

A thousand fell where Kemper led;
A thousand died where Garnett bled;
In blinding flame and strangling smoke
The remnant through the batteries broke
And crossed the works with Armistead.

"Once more in Glory's van with me!"
Virginia said to Tennessee;
"We two together, come what may
Shall stand upon these works today,
The reddest day in history!"

But who shall break the guards that wait
Before the awful face of fate?
The tattered standards of the South
Were shriveled at the cannon's mouth,
And all her hopes were desolate.

In vain the Tennessean set
His breast against the bayonet;
In vain Virginia charged and raged,
A tigress in her wrath uncaged
Till all the hill was red and wet!

Above the bayonets mixed and crossed
Men saw a great, gigantic ghost
Receding through the battle cloud,
And heard across the tempest loud
The death-cry of a nation lost!

The brave went down! Without disgrace
They leaped to Ruin's red embrace;
They only heard Fame's thunder wake
And saw the dazzling sunburst break
In smiles on Glory's bloody face.

In our family's files is a letter from a probable former Union soldier dated August 15, 1904, on the stationery of the American Woolen Company of Boston and New York, signed by a person whose signature is very difficult to read. The first name is probably Lanier, the last name is perhaps Dunix. The letter is written to Finley's son-in-law, the Rev. William C. White, who was pastor in the resort town of Warm Springs in Bath County, VA. Apparently the writer occasionally traveled to Warm Springs from his home in the north. He had heard Finley preach there at the invitation of his son-in-law, and regrets not being there for another such occasion. He writes,

"I shall miss probably a visit from your father-in-law. When he occupied your pulpit, not one word of his sermon did I hear. My mind was occupied by the memory that he penetrated our lines at the battle of Gettysburgh [sic] up to the copse of trees. No American Poet Laureate has immortalized the charge of Pickett's Division in that battle, as Tennyson did charge at Balaklava [sic]; but, if a charge is to be made, I'll go on horseback preferably to walking up, for my horse will

catch some of the iron-hail. To me, Pickett's charge, at Gettysburgh, was the bravest thing men in uniform ever did. Go as I have often down to the field, and like me, be convinced of it."

On the hot afternoon of July 27, 1998. my two young grandsons, my wife and I went "down to the field" and followed the route that Finley took so many years earlier. It was a deeply moving experience to move steadily forward across that enormous open field, to imagine the bullets and cannonballs whizzing by, and to come at last up to the stone wall at the angle and under the shade of the copse of trees, where a dramatically skillful National Park Service interpreter was describing the action at the peak of the battle for a group of tourists.

Where did Finley find the resources that fueled his courage through that "iron-hail" and across the stone wall? His close friend and colleague of later years, the Rev. A. M. Fraser, D.D., pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Staunton, wrote this:

"On the night before Pickett's charge at Gettysburg, he sat alone at the camp fire after his comrades had fallen asleep. He took out his Testament and read from the first chapter of Second Timothy. His attention was riveted to the 12th verse: "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day." The familiar text took possession of him. He offered his prayer in solitude, renewed the dedication of himself to God, by faith took fresh hold on the faithfulness of his divine Protector and went to sleep. Who can say how much of the remarkable heroism he displayed in the desperate fighting the next day grew out of that bit of personal fellowship with God the night before! In after years he would tell his close friends how as he crossed the stone wall the words of his text came back to him with sustaining power, "I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day."

The Latin inscription chosen for the ancient Finley clan crest in Scotland, *"Fortis in Arduis,"* can be translated "Brave in adversity." That was certainly evident in the life of this particular Finley descendant. He would need that bravery for what he would face next.

4. Wartime Service: third, as a Prisoner of War

His immediate experiences upon crossing the stone fence, and in the earliest days after his being taken prisoner, were recorded in a newspaper article, 3 and 2/3 columns long, whose source and date have been trimmed away. These are pasted in a scrapbook he or his family members made after 1892. The context indicates that the publication was a Staunton or Waynesboro paper. The article reads:

"Rev. George W. Finley, D.D., pastor of the Presbyterian Church at Tinkling Spring in this county, is a typical Confederate Veteran—or rather the type that all the old Vets would like to be—six feet high, splendidly proportioned, the glow of health on his cheeks, the eye of a man of thirty, and the white beard of a man of sixty, he is the ideal which dwells in the popular mind of the veteran of many battles. He was in command of Co. K. 58th Va. Infantry, Garnett's brigade of Pickett's division, and was one of the few men who got, alive and unwounded, inside of the enemy's line in the famous charge at Gettysburg.

"On Monday night, by invitation of Stonewall Camp, he gave a talk on his experience from the inside of the enemy's works where they were captured, to Fort Delaware. The room of the

camp was packed even to sitting in the windows, and a large part of the audience was composed of ladies. Lt. Commander J. N. McFarland introduced Comrade Finley.

"Dr. Finley said he had no set address to deliver, as he had seen announced in the papers, but was there simply to narrate to his comrades some incidents on the road from a lost battlefield to a prison. He prefaced his story with the beautiful Confederate poem 'For us.'

"It was about 5 o'clock on the afternoon of July 3rd, 1863, the afternoon of an exceedingly hot day—hot in more senses of the word than one, that there came a lull in the battle. We had carried the enemy's line along the fence. Gen. Armistead with his hat on the point of his sword had leaped the low rock fence which marked the line, and we had gone beyond the 'bloody angle' when the lull came. We were looking behind for the supports that never came. The enemy were massing on both sides of us and pouring in their fire; there was no support and there was nothing to do but to surrender, and we surrendered. As we did so I saw a young man, a mere youth, who was still fighting and who was surrounded by half a dozen Federal soldiers. I ran to him and getting between him and his assailants, I called to him to throw down his gun. He did so, and coming to my side he burst into tears. What could not a hundred thousand men like that have done? The first thing I did after the surrender was go where I had seen Gen. Armistead. I found him lying in a distorted position near the cannon on which he had laid his hand in victory, just before he was shot down. His eyes were rolled back and I thought he was dead, but I heard afterwards that he did not die until away in the night, and I have always regretted that I did not stay with him longer.

"In a few minutes more we were startled by receiving the fire of our own artillery—every old soldier knows what effect that has, to have his own people firing on him. Our men started to run out of the way. A Federal general, Patrick, who was Provost Marshal of Richmond after its fall, rode up and cried out, 'What are you fellows running for? Stand your ground!' This was enough for our men; to be taunted by the enemy settled it, and they all stood still and took the fire. I have never heard what this artillery was firing for, unless it was to support Wilcox's futile assault. You would be astonished to know the hospitality with which we were received by the enemy, and how many of them offered to take us to the rear to get out of the fire themselves. It was 'This way, gentlemen, I'll take you to the rear' from scores of them. But we soon saw what was the matter. There was a line of cavalrymen and infantrymen back of their line using their sabers, guns and big whips and driving back to the front those Federals who were trying to get to the rear—literally lashing them up to their duty.

"Just then we saw one of the cruel incidents of war. The enemy were sending a battery of artillery to the front. The drivers were lashing their horses, already at a gallop. A cannoneer sitting on the limber chest was thrown from his seat by a sharp turn in the road. He was thrown back and forth between the limber and the ammunition chest screaming all the while,, until at last the poor fellow fell under the wheels and was crushed to death. We prisoners were taken back to Rock Creek and by the time we had gotten in line it was night. Here Gen. Patrick made another appearance. He said, 'You men, if you behave yourselves, will be treated well; if you don't, your blood will be on your own hands.' The reception that was given by the prisoners to this blood-and-thunder speech was unique. Between catcalls, jeers, and imitations of animals, you would have thought a zoological garden had been established right on the spot. Gen. Patrick soon rode off. Our guard was composed of the 2d or 12th Pennsylvania cavalry, I can't recollect which. And I am sorry I cannot recollect, for they were true soldiers—watchful, gentlemanly and considerate.

"We were started for Westminster, Md., where we were to take the cars to Baltimore. On the route we met an army wagon train with provisions for Meade's army. One of the teamsters, a ruffian of a fellow, made it his business, as our line was passing, to abuse our men in the foulest language—there was hardly anything that, according to his account, he would not do to us if he could only get to us. We saw one of the Pennsylvania cavalrymen as we neared the teamster eyeing him with a look that bode no good. As he got to him he rode up to him and said, 'Stop that.' The bully showed a bold front. 'Stop that I say,' said the guard. 'You won't go to the front

to fight these men when they have muskets in their hands, and you shan't abuse them while they are unarmed in our charge. Another word (raising his sabre) and I'll cleave you to the chin, you miserable coward!' The bully subsided, off came the hats of the Confederates and there was such a cheer for the Pennsylvania cavalryman as the Confederates knew how to give.

"When we got to Westminster, and were loaded on the cars we lost our Pennsylvania guards, and were put in charge of a Vermont regiment of infantry. Its Colonel was a gentleman, but there was something about the regiment that a Confederate could not understand. Its time of enlistment had expired, and here it was right in the sound of the guns, starting for home; you would not have found a Confederate regiment that would have done that. The Colonel was a gentleman, but as much could not be said for the Major. As we had passed a little residence, a handkerchief had been waved to us from a window. After we halted the Major went back to the house with a guard and arrested a sixteen-year-old Maryland girl, and carried her to the Colonel's headquarters. As she passed us under guard, the little maid looked distressed and perplexed, but I expect the Colonel must have given the Major a pretty round talk, for she was directed to be treated respectfully and sent back home. As she passed us on her return, there was a merry twinkle in her eye, and the Confederates who had been loaded in and on top of the freight train, gave 'Three cheers for the brave Maryland girl.'

"Naturally, a soldier passes through many exciting scenes, but I don't know that I was ever in a more exciting one than during the march through Baltimore. We had been kept waiting at the depot a long time, and the men were impatient, and it seemed as if there were excitement in the very air. The riff-raff of the population had gathered at the depot elated by the fall of Vicksburg and the success at Gettysburg, and they were taunting our men. One little Miss was a good sample of what we had to endure. She would run in and out among the cars saying taunting things. She tackled one old gray bearded Confed who sat on top of a car, with questions about where the Confederate generals who had been killed, were now. 'Where is Father Jackson now?' she asked. The old man looked gravely down on her from the top of the car and said, 'He is where you never will be, little Miss, unless you change your manners.' When we were formed in line for the march through Baltimore, there was a cavalry guard on the pavement, the famous New York Seventh regiment of infantry marching along the gutters on each side. The streets and buildings were full of bunting remaining from the Fourth of July celebration, and U. S. flags hanging across the streets. A great big Confederate, Capt. Cussens, now living near Richmond, with an eye like an eagle and a voice like a trumpet, was put among the prisoners in front and every time he came to a flag he would cry out, 'Open ranks; don't march under the nigger flag boys!' And the prisoners would open ranks and surge apart crowding out the N. Y. Seventh until they got clear of the flag. Along the route the suppressed excitement made evident the fact that the heavy guard that had been provided for the prisoners was more for fear of trouble with the town people, than from any apprehensions of prisoners escaping. As we passed along we found sections of artillery posted en route. Anything would have precipitated bloodshed, and one incident came near doing it. A gentleman and lady, evidently sympathizers, had pushed a little in front of the crowd at a cross street. A cavalryman made two attempts to drive the gentleman back with his saber. The gentleman coolly caught the horse's bit each time and forced it back on its haunches, and at last got safely out of reach with his companion. But while it was going on seven or eight Confederates in the line who had never seen each other before, exchanged glances which said as plain as words that if that cavalryman struck either the man or the woman he would be dragged from his horse and his brains beaten out against the cobble stones. And then no man could have foretold the end. After our march through Baltimore we were taken to Fort McHenry and from there sent by steamer to Fort Delaware.

"On the trip I was sitting apart in the steamer, when a Federal lieutenant came up and wanted to discuss the war, its causes and so forth. I said we cannot discuss on equal terms now. Turn me loose and I will discuss it with you in the only place a discussion can now avail anything—the battle field, at the point of a bayonet and the mouth of the cannon. There is no other argument now that can settle anything about this war (applause).

"During Dr. Finley's narrative he was frequently interrupted by applause, and there was general regret that his narrative, which only occupied thirty minutes, was so brief."

The above events led on into his period of imprisonment, which was to last until after the war's end, until mid-May, 1865—just under two years. In August 1908, a friend asked Finley to write him about his experiences as a Union prisoner of war. Finley replied,

"In reply to your kind request that I give you an account of my experiences as a prisoner of war, I send the following sketch. Although I must depend mainly upon my memory and have to deal with much that is painful to recall, I trust that I have written without any exaggeration and with no bitterness of feeling…."

"From the field, we were taken to Fort McHenry and thence to Fort Delaware. After a few weeks we were herded like cattle in box cars and were sent to Johnson's Island in Lake Erie, near Sandusky City where I remained about nine months including the severe winter. Most of the time we were guarded by Ohio Home Guards, who had seen no service in the field and were consequently pretty rough in their treatment of us. A part of the time troups [sic] from the front--Generals Seymour and Shalers Commands--guarded us, and as far as they were allowed by general orders treated as kindly as true, brave soldiers will ever do those they have met in battle.

"While at Johnson's Island, up to the time I left, we had pretty good and sufficient food and were allowed to prepare it to suit ourselves in the kitchens of each barrack. Among the several thousand officers there were a number of ministers of different denominations and consecrated laymen who kept up a strong religious interest throughout the prison. Among the latter was one of the most remarkable men I ever met, a Captain Ben Griffin, of Texas, I think, who, while illiterate, possessed and manifested such good sense, tact, and earnest Christian spirit as to weild [sic] a most powerful influence for good, organizing and conducting prayer-meeting, Bible classes, and securing regular preaching in many, if not most of the buildings within the prison enclosure.

"With several hundred others sick and wounded, I was sent away ostensibly for exchange, but we were stopped at Point Lookout at the mouth of the Potomac River and held for some months, first in the Hammond General Hospital and afterwards in the Officers prison. Here for the first time we were in part guarded by negro troups who were often very insulting, and without provocation would fire upon the helpless prisoners until a decided and plain remonstrance by our officers and a statement to the authorities that we could no longer bear such treatment and would break out and kill or be killed, as long as one of us was left, brought about some relief. Here too we began to feel the effects of reduced rations and bad water.

"From Point Lookout, we were again, under pretext of exchange, taken to Fort Delaware. Few who were at that Fort can forget the harsh and arrogant Capt. Ahl; or his cruel Lieut. Wolfe, who under General Schoepff had charge of us. Bad water, scant rations, carelessly prepared and issued, with constant risk of being shot by some rash sentinel made life there very trying. To some of us relief and a rich blessing in the end came from meeting and coming under the influence of the Rev. I. W. K. Handy, D.D., a Presbyterian minister from Portsmouth Va. held as a political prisoner without specific charges or trial, whose book 'U.S. Bonds,' gives a true and full account of prison life as he saw and felt it for the long weary months he was kept at Ft. Delaware. A man of earnest Christian spirit and pleasant address, he soon acquired and held the respect and esteem of many of the prisoners, and, associated with ministers and laymen of other denominations, conducted religious services, organized and taught Bible classes, and prayer-meetings and under God's blessing brought many to accept Christ as their Saviour and some of them afterwards to become useful and distinguished ministers of the Gospel. Of our daily life, monotonous and trying, I will not attempt to write in detail. With scant and often misleading accounts of operations in the field, and constant excitement of hope of exchange, only to be

1. Capt. George W. Lewis. 2. Capt. George W. Moore. 3. Priv. John H. Maynadier. 4. Lieut. W. M. Bullock. 5. Capt. Chas. T. Cyrus. 6. Lieut. F. C. Moore. 7. Lieut. John C. Allen. 8. Lieut. Claude C. Turner. 9. Capt. H. L. W. Johnson. 10. Lieut. James F. Caldwell. 11. Capt. A. M. Samford. 12. Rev. Dr. Handy. 13. Capt. Thos. W. Harris. 14. Col. Isaac Hardeman. 15. Capt. Frank C. Robbins. 16. Capt. Wm. R. White. 17. Lieut. George W. Finley.

CONFEDERATE GROUP.

This photograph of a group of Confederate prisoners of war was taken at the Federal P.O.W. camp at Fort Delaware in 1863 or 1864, according to a note written by a family member on the back of this copy. According to his memoirs Finley was at Fort Delaware three different times during his imprisonment. The first was for a few weeks shortly after his capture at Gettysburg in the summer of 1863. The second was after he spent nine months and a bitter winter at a prison camp in Lake Erie. That would have been in the late spring or early summer of 1864. In August of that year he was sent to Fort Sumter in South Carolina. In the early spring of 1865 he was sent to Fort Delaware again, from which he was finally released in May. He wrote that when he was returned to Fort Delaware for the third time, he "was very feeble and almost blind." Since he does not look quite that ill in the photograph, the photograph should probably be dated during his second imprisonment, in the spring or summer of 1864.

Further supporting that judgment, note that the person in black civilian clothes, in the very middle of the photograph (the third person from the left in the middle row) is named as "Rev. Dr. Handy." I. W. K. Handy, D.D., a Presbyterian minister from Portsmouth, was a political prisoner kept with the POWs. On p. 11 of this paper is an account of this man's positive impact on George Finley and others, set during the narrative of Finley's second imprisonment at Fort Delaware.

disappointed, we spent the weary summer of 1864, until some time in August six hundred of us, mainly Captains and Lieutenants--were selected and sent to Charleston Harbor S.C. to be placed under the fire of our own guns. As we were told at the time this was in retaliation for treatment of Federal Officers by our authorities at Charleston.

"We were crowded into a side wheel steamer, filled with temporary bunks between decks. The passage from Fort Delaware to Charleston was horrible. My bunk, a single one, was just under the shaft, and against the engine room of the steamer. I could not sit up in it nor lie down without almost squeezing myself under the shaft, while the partition between me and the boiler was so hot I could not bear my hand upon it. There in the almost pitch darkness, without any clothing and drenched with perspiration, I had to remain for several days and nights. Our ration was a few crackers with a bit of salt beef or bacon, and the water used that was condensed from the ocean as we steamed along. I do not believe that I could have survived such treatment much longer, when in the good providence of god [sic] I was taken on deck at the solicitation of a wounded comrade from North Carolina, who as a Mason made himself known to a fellow Mason of the guard, who treated him very kindly and got me out of the dark and hot bunk to help take care of my almost helpless friend. On reaching the port of Charleston we were kept for days upon the ship while fruitless efforts were made to effect an exchange of prisoners, and then landed upon Morris Island and placed in a stockade between Batteries Wagner and Gregg, and there exposed to the fire from Fort Sumpter [sic], Sullivan's Island and other points around the City. The Federal guns in reply had to fire over us. But as the Confederates knew the ground and distance thoroughly we were in but little danger save from premature explosions of shells. In fact, not one of us was struck while under that fire day and night. Bad and hard to bear as was our lot on the steamer it was much worse in that stockade.

"As we entered it, every man was deprived of his blanket if, as was the case with nearly every one, it was a U. S. blanket captured on the battlefield, and nothing was given in exchange for it. Some few of us, among whom I happened to be one, had been given a blanket by the surgeon of the steamer while sick on the deck, and we were allowed to retain it. Our guard, for the most part, was from the 54th Mass. Reg., (Col. Shaw's famous command) composed of free negroes from the North and slaves impressed from the south. This Command had suffered severely in the assault on Battery Wagner and was very bitter and insolent and seemed, especially on the part of the free negroes, bent on provoking an outbreak on the part of the prisoners, and an opportunity to shoot them down. A negro Sergeant had charge of each Company of prisoners, to call the roll and issue the rations. These rations consisted of <u>four</u> small crackers and a cup of <u>bean</u> <u>soup</u> with a bit of meat, only a few ounces issued each day by a dirty negro from a camp kettle carried along the Company street. A perplexing problem was how to divide these <u>four</u> crackers for <u>three</u> <u>meals</u> when the craving stomach called for all and more of them for <u>one</u> meal. The water given us came from pits dug in the low sandy soil, and our shelter was a small A tent. Almost the only alleviation of our dreary days and nights was in watching the mortar shells as they went over our stockade, or in seeing the negro guard dive from the parapet into the sand as a rifle shell screamed by them. Many, if not most of us, became sick and weak with very scant appliances for our relief or comfort. Once a supply of food and tobacco, gathered and sent by the ladies of Charleston, was all owed to be distributed among us. But owing to some 'red tape' or other the food was almost all spoiled before we got it. The tobacco was of great service not only to those who used it, but as a means of barter with our guards. At rare intervals a sutler's small cart with bread, molasses, paper and a few other articles was allowed to enter, and the prisoners to purchase what they could,. A small loaf of bread was sold for 50 cents in U. S. Currency. Only a few of the prisoners could or did avail themselves of this scant and infrequent supply.

In later years an effort was made by some Confederate veterans to erect a monument to the six hundred officers who refused to take a way out. They were guaranteed by their captors that if they renounced their allegiance to the Confederacy they would be immediately removed from their imprisonment in that stockade where they

were under Confederate mortar fire. George Finley had no use for such a monument. I have heard it told several times, in conversation with my older relatives, that he adamantly opposed such a memorial on the grounds that "We were only doing our duty; that is not worth a special monument!" His account continued,

"Just how long we remained in that stockade I do not not [sic] remember, but as illustrating the disposition of our guard, I will say that on the day before we left the Colonel of this regiment came among us and told us that we were to move early the next day, he had repealed the order prohibiting us from leaving our tents before sunrise, and that we could get up and be ready to march as soon as possible after daybreak. Early next morning we heard the angry and insolent challenge of some of the guards ordering men back into their tents, and soon the report of a gun. The guard had fired and, as usual, missed the man he shot at, but wounded two soldiers who were lying in their tent. When we moved, we were put into two sailing vessels and kept for some time in one of the arms of the bay and then sent by steamer to Fort Pulaski, at the mouth of the Savannah River, and put, along with our guards, in the dark and damp casemates of the Fort. As to rations and water our treatment was still bad, but the white troupes [sic]–a New York Regiment--were disposed to treat us kindly. The Colonel, a gentlemanly soldier, seemed to grieve under the rigid orders of his superiors, and more than once purchased and sent to us fresh fish, or condemned commissary stores, for which treatment, as "The Records of the Rebellion" published by Congress show, he was called to account and severely censured. The close damp quarters soon began to tell on the health of guards and prisoners. So the party was divided and about half of us were sent to Hilton Head Island in Port Royal Harbor, about half way between Charleston and Savannah. Kept aboard the ship with a close guard of naval vessels and a patrolling tug around us every night, and with many a shark circling about our ship, we remained some days and then were landed and put into a camp. Hilton Head Island seemed to be a sort of base of supplies for all of that department under General Foster, and was guarded by quite a large body of troops, principally negroes. It was unusually cool for that season and climate and we suffered while in the tents without blankets or fire or feed sufficient. From the camp we were transferred to wooden barracks near the point of the Island. These were large frame buildings divided into berths similar to those in a ship, and a long table run the length of the room. About one hundred of us were allotted to the lower floor of one of these buildings, while the upper story was used as a Hospital for Federal or Confederate sick or wounded.

"Here alas! our old friends (?) the 54th Massachusetts; were again put over us, if anything more savage and insolent than before. The wonderful patience and self restraint of our officers under the constant provocations of these brutes has always filled me with amazement. Imagine yourself compelled for weeks and months to live over a powder magazine with a lot of reckless revelers all the while below you, and liable any moment to cause an explosion, and you will have a faint idea of our situation. Soon after we entered those barracks an order, said to come from General Foster, limited our rations to ten ounces of cornmeal, four ounces of flour for each day, and for every five days a half pint of pickles and two ounces of salt. To prepare this the camp kettles suspended over an iron rail out of doors, and a small billet of wood for four men every two days was all that the authorities furnished us. The meal, as shown by marks on the barrels, was kiln dried in New York in 1861 and issued to us in the winters of 64 and 65. It was mouldy, much of it rotten and swarmed with vermin, so that most of it would crawl away if not confined. The flour was little if any better. The pickle only sharpened the appetite the remaining ration could not satisfy, and the main use of the pickle issue was to eke out with the staves of the casks the scant supply of wood furnished us. Absolutely nothing else was given to us for over forty days. A few of the more fortunate men could occasionally get, by purchase or barter, a little of the grease skimmed from the boilers in which food for the hospital was prepared. Remember too that this was in an unusually cold winter for that reason [he must have meant or dictated "region"], when water would freeze in our bunks, with no fire, scant clothing and very little covering for those who had to sleep on the hard planks of their berths. None who heard it can ever forget the doleful sound of the tramp, tramp of those who walked about the table to keep from freezing; nor can any who saw it fail to remember how strong men, like dogs about a table,

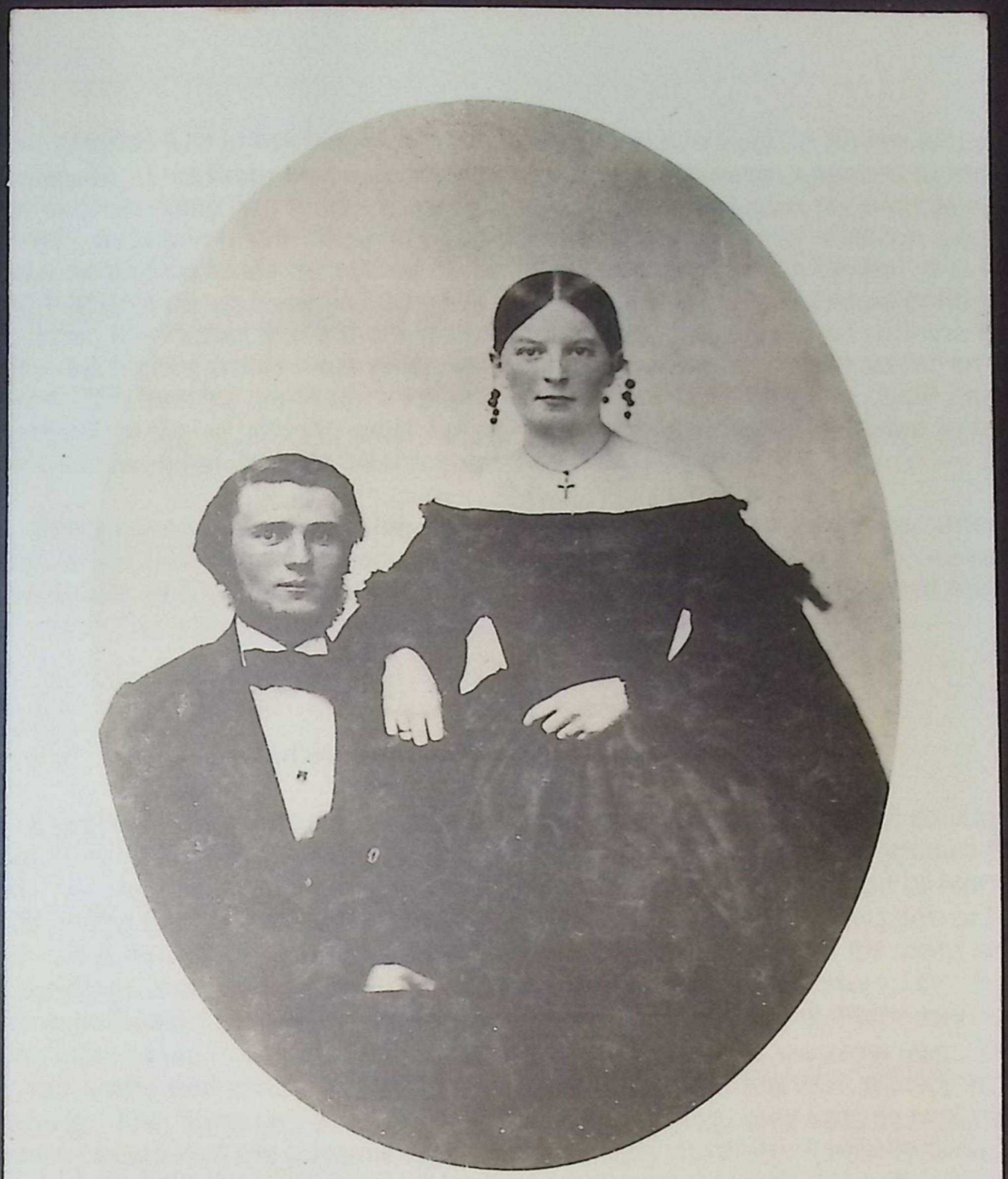
would crawl over the dirty floor seeking any crust that might fall from the table. Soon sickness grew worse and persistent, great black splotches appeared over the body and limbs and men failed rapidly and some died. In fact, but for the earnest protest at last of the kind old surgeon from Pennsylvania, whose name I have been, much to my regret, unable to recall, I believe we would all have perished. He so told the authorities and then a small Irish potato and a little bit of meat was added to the rations.

"When the party was divided at Fort Pulaski all of the ministers among us were left there. Soon after going into the barracks at Hilton Head a number of officers, most of them non-professors of religion, waited on me and begged that I would hold some service as they did not want to live like heathen and not even know when Sunday came. They had known me to assist Dr. Handy in such service at Fort Delaware. I told them that I was not a minister, but would gladly do all I could. I found one noble man, Captain George W. Lewis, Company I, 1st Georgia Infantry, of Bainbridge, who was willing to join me, and we began and kept up a prayer-meeting every Sunday and Wednesday night while we remained at Hilton head. The prisoners soon came to regard and treat me as a quasi chaplain, and the good old surgeon mentioned above would take me to the Hospital to read and pray with the sick, and secured permission for me to accompany the body of any who died to their burial. By the side of the grave I would read a selection from the Scriptures and utter a brief prayer and leave all that was mortal of those dear Comrades to rest under the Southern pine, far away from home and loved ones. There and then I gained experience that has helped me much in my ministry ever since.

"Some time in February or March of '65 the welcome orders came to remove us. As we boarded the ship, along with our comrades from Fort Pulaski, we were again most positively assured that we were to be taken to Virginia for exchange. Though much elated by such a prospect it could not prevent the horrors of the passage up the Coast. Men in such condition as we were soon yielded to seasickness and very few escaped. As we were not allowed to go on deck, I leave you to imagine the condition between decks, with hundreds of sick and suffering men all around you. We were taken to Norfolk and while the ship was coaled, still assured that we would be taken up James River and be exchanged. Imagine the bitter disappointment of each of us when the ship headed for the Capes and took us to Fort Delaware. One poor Lieutenant, almost in sight of his home, who had rallied under the hope of soon reaching it, sank under the despondency and died a few hours after we left the Capes. When for the third time I entered the gates of Fort Delaware I almost despaired of ever reaching home again. I was very feeble and almost blind. Bad as had been the condition of those we had left at Fort Delaware, it was not as bad as ours and our Comrades seeing our condition kindly did all they could to relieve and help us.

"During my stay at Hilton Head I had been put into communication with some friends of the South in Baltimore who did much—as far as they were permitted—to help my mess. When the sad news of General Lee's and General Johnson's surrender came, the efforts to induce us to take the oath to the U. S. Government were renewed and pressed, but the Virginia Officers steadfastly refused, until about the middle of May, a meeting was held by them in prison and it was determined that the time had come to yield. The good lady in Baltimore who had interested herself for me and my Comrades and whose name, long borne by one of my daughters, I would give had I her permission to do so, went to work and secured from General Grant an order for me to be released by taking the oath, and sent it by another lady to Fort Delaware. So under the goodness of God through these dear friends, I was released May 14th – 1865, and taken to the home of my friend in Baltimore, treated most royally, and sent to Richmond, and reached my home about the 21st of May, broken in health and fortune, but greeted by my mother, wife and children and friends mercifully spared to me."

In another account of his prisoner of war experiences, he described himself at the time of his release as "very feeble and almost blind" (Howard W. Wilson, The Tinkling Spring: Headwater of Freedom, p. 360). The "good lady from Baltimore" was Mrs. Cora



The Rev. George Williamson Finley and his wife, Margaret Elizabeth Booker Finley. This photograph was probably taken early in his ministry, during the late 1860s. On its back this photograph is stamped "Beverly Studio, Staunton." Finley was at the time a pastor in northern West Virginia. This may have been taken in a studio in Staunton while the couple was visiting there; or it may have been taken elsewhere and copied there years later, when he was pastor of a church not far from Staunton.

Williams. Stories told in the family indicate she nursed him back to health when he was desperately ill. This first-person account given above, however, appears to indicate that she had been sending him food packages and was able to secure his prompt release from prison, entertain him briefly and send him on home. A family tradition also has it that since he had no funds he walked home from Baltimore to Clarksville. It is highly doubtful that anyone who was in George's physical condition could have done that in a week's time. It is likelier that if there were any trains or stagecoaches running by then, his Baltimore friends would have given him enough money to get him as far as Richmond, and then he might have walked from there. That scenario could possibly fit in a week's time frame. On the other hand, it is possible that she was able to take him to her home to nurse him back to health before he was "released."

Years later his granddaughter Harriet Tynes told another granddaughter, Margaret White Bear, that she once asked Grandfather Finley if he really ate rats while a prisoner of war, and his reply was, with a smile, "No, child, I was not one of the lucky ones."

5. Finley Becomes a Minister of the Gospel

It is clear from his experiences as a prisoner that a firm sense of calling to the ministry must have been growing in Finley's mind as he looked ahead toward the end of the war. He was received under the care of Orange Presbytery, Synod of North Carolina, in the fall of 1865. After a time for recuperation from the ravages of his imprisonment, in January 1866 he returned to Hampden-Sydney, a far more seasoned and determined human being than he had been as a college freshman. On the college campus was located Union Theological Seminary, whose move to Richmond some three decades later would make it a serious issue in Finley's life, as we shall see. This time Finley had a wife and children with him. In the aftermath of the war, money was tight everywhere. The Seminary was operating on a shoestring, only able to resume instruction because of the generosity of some wealthy northern Presbyterians. "Students were invited to return whether they had money or not. Twenty-four accepted the invitation, most of them wearing Confederate uniforms with buttons covered in black, since it was unlawful to wear 'rebel' buttons." (Balmer Kelly, ed., A General Catalog of Trustees, Officers, Professors, and Students of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, p. 10) In a letter to a relative written January 9, 1867, Finley said:

> "I found it so expensive living here I could not stand it. It was with difficulty I could get a place for my family, and had not her sister Nannie Booker Eggleston volunteered to take Mag and the children, I don't know what I would have done. I have furnished a room at the Seminary and board myself, doing most of my cooking. I am keeping a miserable batchelor's establishment up at the Seminary."

Finley earned part of his expenses, or had some of his expenses taken care of, by tutoring the youngest brother of his wife, 15-year-old James Edward Booker. A letter from Nancy Finley White Allen to her younger half-sister, Lucilla Booker White Whitted, dated October 24, 1978, quotes a letter from J. E. Booker in the possession of another sister, Gertrude Williamson White Irvine (my mother), in which "Uncle Eddie" Booker wrote:

The Rev. & Mrs. George Williamson Finley and their early children, who are (left to right) Cora, Nannie, John, and Augustus. This photograph was taken ca. 1870.

"George W. Finley engaged a house at Hampden-Sydney as he was then married. It was arranged for me to stay in this home where I could be taught by GWF and prepared for College. He taught me the entire sessions of 1865-66."

Once having finished his seminary training, which only took him two years, Finley was ready to undertake pastoral work. In October 1867 he was licensed by Orange Presbytery meeting at Chapel Hill, NC. [See the next note for source, p. 7] But his calling led him northward instead of south. Dr. A. M. Fraser's testimony to him describes the way he dealt with the tensions left over from the recent war:

"Not long after leaving Seminary, he was invited to preach at a church with a view to a call. [This would have been at Gerardstown, West Virginia.] That church was on the border between the North and the South. The congregation was about evenly divided in their sympathies between the two sections. The Session was also evenly divided. Partisan animosity was at its height. On the arrival at the church, the Elders took him into the grove for a conference and demanded to know how he stood on the question that so divided them. This was in substance his answer: 'Gentlemen, my sympathies were with the Confederacy. I fought on that side throughout the war. I have no apologies to make for doing so. If I had it to do over again, I would do the same thing. But I do not see that that has anything to do with this question. I have not come here to talk about the war or preach my political views. I do not expect to refer to such questions. I came here to preach the Gospel.' As the interview ended, those on the Union side remarked that they would not oppose his preaching for the church, but gave notice that they would not be responsible for his salary. As they walked back to the church, he decided not to use the sermon he had expected to preach. He chose a new text, 'I determined not to know anything among you save Jesus Christ and Him crucified.' He had few equals as an extemporaneous speaker. The congregation that day was completely won by him. He lived up to that text. The old question was never raised again. And by a brief, but successful ministry, he laid the foundation for his long service, which was so eminently blessed throughout."

Finley was ordained to the ministry by Winchester Presbytery on October 20, 1868, at Woodstock, VA. He served as a "domestic missionary" the Gerardstown, Bunker Hill, and Smithfield Churches, a home mission field, located not far from Romney, for two years. In late November 1869 the distinguished pastor and historian Rev. William Henry Foote, who had served the Romney–Springfield--Patterson's Creek charge 1827—1838 and again beginning in 1845 (in the interval he served as Secretary of the denomination's Central Board of Foreign Missions), died; and that charge became open. Early in 1870 the Romney and Springfield churches extended calls to Finley to become pastor of the Romney and Springfield Presbyterian Churches, where he served with distinction for 22 years. [Note: these dates are taken from p. 7 of a typescript copy of "Sketch of Romney and Springfield Churches" by the Rev. John A. Scott, written during the time Finley was pastor there; the author had access to Finley for all the dates cited. But see also the recollections of the Rev. Charles R. Stribling, just after Finley's death, given below, which imply a longer time span, or might have been conflated in Stribling's memory with events in the pastorate at Romney (Stribling having served in that same area). Since the 1868 to 1870 dates given above agree with those under Finley's entry in A General Catalog of Trustees, Officers, Professors, and Students of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia, ed. by Balmer H. Kelly, (through 1976), they are likely to be correct.]

Before George and "Mag" Finley moved to West Virginia they had lost in early infancy their first child, a boy named for his father, and had four living children: Nannie, Augustus, John, and Cora. Their sixth child, also named for his father, was born during their time at Gerardstown, and he lived only a few months. All remaining eight of their children were born during their stay at Romney, but one of their twin daughters died when a year and a month old. Before the family left Romney, their eldest daughter, Nannie, had married the Rev. William Chester White in the Romney church.

The Finley family at Romney, WV, ca. 1886. Back row, left to right: Cora Williams Finley; Miss Mary Cabott, a family friend; James Irvine Finley, Lucilla Elliott Finley, Nannie Edwards Finley. Front row: the Rev. George Williamson Finley, Margaret Elizabeth Finley, Martha Watkins Finley, Anne Edwards Williamson Finley (George's mother), Virginia Ruth Finley, Margaret Elizabeth Booker Finley (George's wife), and Robert Dailey Finley.

Their children were as follows:

1. George Williamson Finley (II), b. December 1, 1860, d. December 4, 1860
2. Nannie Edwards Finley, b. October 12, 1861, d. June 5, 1900;
   she married the Rev. Dr. William Chester White
3. Augustus Clement Finley (II), b. October 21, 1863, d. May 26, 1949;
   he married Agnes Langhorne Johnson
4. John Booker Finley, b. October 21, 1866, d. March 20, 1923;
   he married Charlotte Deming
5. Cora Williams Finley, b. June 19, 1867, d. September 9, 1950;
   she married Edwin Myers Gilkeson
6. George Williamson Finley (III), b. May 1, 1869, d. September 18, 1869
7. William Edward Finley, b. March 20,1871, d. September 3, 1942;
   he married Nora Heiskill
8. Lucilla Elliott Finley, b. November 28, 1872, d. July 13, 1956;
   she married Robert Wilson Moffett
9. James Irvine Finley, b. May 28, 1875, d. October 2, 1892;
   he died aged 17 in an accident
10. Margaret Elizabeth Finley, b. March 29, 1877, d. April 27, 1966;
    she married Achilles Lyon Tynes, M.D.
11. Martha Watkins Finley, b. September 26, 1878, d. February 6, 1933;
    she was the second wife of the Rev. Dr. William Chester White
12. Virginia Ruth Finley, b. July 31, 1880, d. January 5, 1964
13. Rebecca Dailey Finley, b. July 31, 1880, d. August 30, 1881;
    twin to Virginia Ruth, she died at age one
14. Robert Dailey Finley, b. May 31, 1882, d. March 31, 1956;
    he married Sarah Louise Miller

In 1892 Finley accepted a call to the historic Tinkling Spring Presbyterian Church near Fishersville in Augusta County, VA, in the bounds of Lexington Presbytery (the same presbytery in which his son-in-law, the Rev. William Chester White, was serving as pastor at Warm Springs Presbyterian Church). Just a few months after their move to Tinkling Spring, tragedy struck in the loss of their 17-year-old son "Irvine" due to an accidental gunshot wound suffered while he was out hunting,. What is now Finley Memorial Presbyterian Church in Stuarts Draft was at the time an outpost or preaching point and Sunday School, with a building begun in 1891. Finley served the people there with the same faithfulness he gave the Tinkling Spring congregation. Soon after his death it was organized as a separate church and its people named the church for him. George Finley served the people of this area with great distinction for seventeen years until his death on April 23, 1909. The historian of the Tinkling Spring Church, Dr. Howard McKnight Wilson, writes of him, "The high standard of preaching and pastoral work and the interest in education characteristic of former pastors were present almost to a degree of perfection in Dr. Finley's work." (Howard M. Wilson, The Tinkling Spring: Headwater of Freedom, p. 360.) "Mag" had preceded him in death four years earlier. They are memorialized by an imposing shaft just to the left of the entrance to the "younger" of the two cemeteries at the Tinkling Spring church.

My mother, Gertrude Williamson White Irvine, was about 12 at the time of her grandfather's death. She told me this account concerning his death:

"My grandfather had not been too well and for a rest he had gone to South Carolina to visit his daughter Ruth Finley at the school for the deaf where she worked. He stayed there for some days and though still not well, decided to come home on the train by himself.

"When he reached Staunton, somehow there was a mixup and nobody came to the station to meet him. He sat there inside the unheated station, alone, obviously feeling and looking ill, his head bowed. The stationmaster came to close up the station, saw him, and inquired after his condition. He told the stationmaster that he had expected someone from Dr. Tynes' home to come get him. The stationmaster saw to the necessary arrangements and eventually Dr. Finley was taken to the Tynes home, which he was not to leave for the remaining days of his life. Achilles Lacy Tynes, M.D., was his son-in-law.

"He had pneumonia and sent a letter of resignation to his congregation which was rejected, but he did not recover."

Dr. Finley had been a member of the Board of Trustees of Union Theological Seminary for some years, and served a term as its president. In its meeting of May 12th, 1909, the Board adopted the following memorial:

"Rev. George William [sic] Finley, D.D., became a member of this Board in 1896 and served until his death, April 23d, 1909. For those thirteen years, he was a faithful attendant upon the meetings of this body, thoroughly devoted to the interests of this seminary, earnest and judicious in advancing every scheme to promote its welfare and usefulness. He enjoyed the full confidence and warm affection of every member of this Board who served with him, and was esteemed in highest degree for his Christian character, his delicate courtesy, his beautiful spirit, his unswerving fidelity to every trust, the wisdom of his counsels, and the ability with which he pursued them.

"This Board adopts this statement, and orders it to be recorded upon its Minute Book as a dutiful, but inadequate, tribute to the memory of this beloved brother, and directs the Secretary to send a copy of it to the family of Dr. Finley in testimony of the high esteem in which it held him and of its sympathy in both the sorrow and the hope caused by his death." (Copied from a copy of that document in a scrapbook kept by the family.)

6. His Accomplishments in Ministry and his Character

He left every one of his churches stronger than when he came. But his career and character were widely noted by the larger church. Signal honors came to Finley across his ministerial career. His colleague, the Rev. Dr. A. M. Fraser, who was pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Staunton, wrote of him:

"His ability and his fine spirit were recognized on every hand. In 1869 his alma mater, Washington and Lee University, conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity. A number of times he served the Presbytery in the General Assembly. He was appointed on important committees. He was a trustee of different institutions of learning, as Hampden-Sydney College, Union Theological Seminary, Mary Baldwin Seminary and Davis and Elkins College. He served terms as President of the Boards of Trustees of the first three of these institutions and held that position in the Mary Baldwin board continuously for sixteen years, from the time of his becoming a member of it until his death.

"Of all the ecclesiastical honors that came to him, he prized most his election as Moderator of the Synod of Virginia. The Synod was in session in Charleston, West Virginia in

WILLIAM SMITH MORTON LIBRARY
UNION THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY
& PRESBYTERIAN SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION
RICHMOND, VA 23227-4597

1895. There was in the Synod at that time a large group of remarkable men, ministers and elders, men of scholarship, of reputation, of wit and power in speaking and skill in debate, of self control and chivalry. That meeting was one of the most memorable in the history of the Synod. The absorbing question before it was that of the removal of Union Theological Seminary from Hampden-Sydney to Richmond. It was truly a burning question. Feeling ran high. Many of the ablest members took part in the discussion. It was a masterpiece of debate, with scarcely a ripple of unpleasantness. In a deliberative body, the presiding officer has much to do with the making and control of its psychology. In a large measure Dr. Finley should have the credit for making that Synod what it was. An alumnus and now also a trustee of both College and the Seminary, so long side by side at Hampden-Sydney, all the traditions were dear to him. With all the intensity of his ardent soul he wished the Seminary to remain where it was. And yet so perfect was his self control while in the Moderator's chair, that not a word or act throughout the debate indicated on which side his sympathies were, and no ruling of his caused any dissatisfaction. All ended in perfect good will.

"Dr. Finley was an enthusiastic Confederate. He was a member of the Stonewall Jackson Camp of Confederate Veterans and served a term as Commander. He was intensely popular with his comrades and was much sought after for addresses on Confederate occasions."

Dr. Fraser summed up his character in these words:

"Dr. Finley became prominent and influential in the Church at large. He was a very strong, interesting, and effective preacher. He was a most superior pastor, a winsome personality, an ingatherer of souls into the Kingdom, a wise counselor, an affectionate friend, a fearless antagonist of error and wrongdoing, and an able administrator of church affairs. In the Courts of the Church he was always a leader, a rare parliamentarian, showing always a ready familiarity with church law and precedents, stating his views with convincing clearness and force, the very soul of courtesy in debate, of graceful action in speaking, remarkably considerate and helpful toward young ministers, and devoid of professional jealousy."

In our family files is a typewritten copy of other testimonials about him spoken at what likely was the first regular meeting of the Presbytery of Lexington after his funeral. These describe how his peers, his fellow pastors and ruling elders who also knew him well, felt about him:

(1) The Rev. Goodridge Alexander Wilson, Sr., D.D., superintendent of Home Missions for Lexington Presbytery, said:

"Dr. Finley as a man was courteous, kind, tender, a wise counselor, a faithful friend. His high sense of duty and loyalty to God caused him to lose sight of all lesser claims. He always stood before the Lord as a soldier at attention, ready to do his Captain's or Commander's will, no matter what it might cost him. Dr. Finley was a preacher of a very high order. He was a clear, strong thinker, with a wonderful gift of language and a delivery which was graceful, easy and so admirably adapted to the thought which he was expressing, that it made him a preacher of great power. As a Presbyter he was cognizant of ecclesiastical law, with its growth and development. Dr. Finley was invaluable in the Courts of the Church. A marked feature in him was his uniform courtesy and fairness in debate. It was Dr. Finley's custom, so far as my experience has gone, to state his opponent's position even more strongly than he could state it himself, and then proceed, with a master hand, to defeat him."

Apropos of Dr. Finley's "cognizance of ecclesiastical law," my mother, Gertrude Williamson White Irvine (1897-2001), told me that after the untimely death of her mother, Nannie Edwards Finley, in June 1900, her father courted her mother's sister, Martha Watkins "Pattie" Finley. But because at that time church law in the Presbyterian Church in the United States prohibited marriage to the sister of one's deceased spouse, Dr.

Finley, the father of these two girls, would not give his blessing to their marriage, even though he thoroughly approved of the Rev. William Chester White as a son-in-law. The couple had to wait several years to marry, finally doing so in September 1905, after the General Assembly of the PCUS dispensed with that rule!

Dr. Wilson's testimony continued:

"It was in the year 1874 that I first met Dr. Finley. I was a student at Hampden-Sydney College, a member of the Senior class. It was the night of our graduation. I was one of the speakers of the class and when I had finished my oration, there was brought to me, amongst other things, a note signed, 'your father's friend, G. W. Finley.' I didn't know him. I had heard father speak of him, perhaps, but I had never seen him. He came to me a few minutes later, when the exercises were closed, and said to me, 'Your father was my pastor when I was a boy. Your father led me to Christ. I professed religion and joined the Church under his ministry.' I saw Dr. Finley after that always once a year, first at the Seminary or at the College, and every year at the Synod. I never saw him at any other occasions. He never failed to come to me and ask after my father....Years later, eighteen years ago, when we were thrown in the same Presbytery and thrown much together, when I became personally acquainted with him, in fact close friends, always when Dr. Finley would see me after a few months' separation, his first inquiry would be, 'How is you father? When did you hear from your old father?' It was so until the very last—until my father's death. I mention this to illustrate what I think, and have always thought, was one of the most striking and strongest characteristics amongst the many strong and admirable traits which marked this great and good man, and that was his loyalty. I never met a man more loyal to friends, to his own individual Church, to his own people, to his Presbytery, to his brethren, to his country, to his Master. It was always my thought as I looked at the man—and I looked at him often and admired him—that amongst his most striking, strongest traits was that of loyalty."

(2) The Rev. James Nicholas Van Devanter, Sr., pastor at Augusta Stone Presbyterian Church, said:

"My knowledge of Dr. Finley extends, I may say, to the year 1876. It isn't my purpose to rehearse those experiences of the past, but an unusual privilege was granted me coming to his home in Staunton (this was his daughter's home, where he died) on Tuesday evening before his death. I received the request from his daughter [Margaret Elizabeth Finley Tynes] to remain at their home, if I could do so without inconvenience, to remain with him in his decline, and I esteemed it one of the greatest privileges of my life to be permitted to do so. Every lucid moment was occupied with reference to his people and in an effort to express himself with regard to the future. In the evening before his death, when his physician [Margaret's husband. Dr. Achilles Lyon Tynes] had rendered his services to him, he said, 'Doctor, you will soon be with your wife.' He said, 'If that is the fact that you are holding out before me, let me go, and let me go quickly.' He was a man of strong affection, bound to his family, as I reckon any true father would be, but the most touching thing, and I hope that Dr. Fraser will repeat what he himself said at the funeral, was the figure that he drew of Dr. Finley preaching one of those magnificent sermons, and then, with that characteristic gesture, pronouncing the benediction upon 'my people,' as he called them so often. Over and over it was 'my people, my people, my people,' and I wish I could tell you the way he drew the picture of that noble soldier of the cross, with that characteristic gesture imploring God's blessing upon his people."

(3) The Rev. Charles Riddle Stribling, pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Waynesboro, testified:

"I wish to say that it seems to me that to us who knew Dr. Finley and loved him, that monument of the great soldier, our beloved chief, Stonewall Jackson, brings to us its illustration and its message. Our hearts are too full for utterance. No language could explain to those who did not know him what he was in his home, his Church and in the Presbytery; nor is that language needed to us who knew him.

"You cannot imagine how high the feeling ran in the first pastoral charge on the border line after the war. He was sent there to hold the church, to keep it together. He did noble work, and when he felt that he could be released from the anxiety and from the distress and strain upon him, he asked the Presbytery to allow him to accept another call, and the Presbytery sent him back to an old dilapidated stone manse. He went back there loyally, took up his work and did all that yet remained. Again some years later it was his desire and wish to leave. He laid the matter before the Presbytery and it said, 'No, doctor, you can't go. You must go back to Laurel.' Twice in his ministry the presbytery exerted its power and said to him, 'Stay where you are whatever the cost.' And his influence, the influence of his loyalty there, bore its fruit. Thank God for his life!"

(4) The Rev. A. M. Fraser, D.D., pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Staunton, said:

"I feel almost as if it is an intrusion for me to speak now in reference to Dr. Finley's life, more than that which our brethren who have spoken so tenderly and so truly have already said, and yet there was one side of his life and character that ought to be brought out. It was that responsiveness of his heart to anything that was true, that he thought was good in any man. One soon learned to appreciate him and his friendship and affection. I had the opportunity of watching the impression that he made upon strangers in the Mary Baldwin Seminary. As successive lady teachers came to that institution year after year, they all seemed to be greatly impressed with the courteous manner and consideration he showed to them. He was an affectionate strong man and very tender. It is impossible to speak fully or even passingly of the various aspects of Dr. Finley's character in the short time we have. We can only hope to mention those things that come to us at this time. I think, though, that the brethren ought to know that in the last week of his illness Brother Van Devanter, who was so devoted and self-sacrificing, so comforting and helpful to him and to his family, gave up his work and his home and just stayed there in the house and nursed Dr. Finley, and did it devotedly, and I don't think he took any rest those last three nights. It was impossible to tear him away. His fidelity and affection were so powerful that he just stayed with him to the end."

(5) The Rev. Alfred Thurston Graham, D. D., pastor of the Lexington Presbyterian Church, added:

"It is rather imprudent for one who is as new in the Presbytery as I am to speak at this time, and yet my ties with Dr. Finley go farther than anyone here. I can remember the time I first knew Dr. Finley. I was a child in my father's home, and he was there, and I mention that fact just to mention this other fact, and to illustrate what I think was one of the most beautiful traits of his character—his affection for children. When Dr. Finley was in the home when I was a little boy I couldn't get away from him, and I couldn't do it when I was older, either. I loved to be with him. The little scene I wish to mention was at Lexington Presbytery. I found a little boy following Dr. Finley, running everywhere he went. He couldn't stay away from him, and he had some chestnuts and insisted on Doctor's taking them. He finally did take some and put them in his pocket. The little boy was happy and was absolutely his slave. I told Dr. Finley at the time that that little boy had called back the sweet sense of his visits in my father's home and how he held me and has always held me to this day."

(6) The Rev. Holmes Rolston (I), pastor of Hebron Presbyterian Church near Staunton, said,

"I have only a word or two to express my deep love for Dr. Finley and the sense of loss that came to me when I knew that he had passed away. Dr. Graham's remarks reminded me of the

thought that came to me at the time I heard of Dr. Finley's death. That sense of loss to our home Mission Committee, to our Presbytery, and to our church at large bearing down upon my soul, I thought of the little incident that occurred when Phillips Brooks died, and a little child said, 'Won't the angels be glad?'"

(7) The Honorable John T. Byrd said,

"I was first acquainted with Dr. Finley at Presbytery. When I talked with him he said, 'Anything I can teach you, tell me.' I went to Dr. Finley's house. We had in our county (Highland County, Va.) a people we recognize as orthodox and I asked him to give us instructions and tell me the doctrine of these people. I carry a little memorandum book in my pocket, and Dr. Finley took this book and wrote down names in it. 'Now,' he said, 'when you get home take down Buck's Theological Dictionary and the whole thing will be explained.' That was the first time that I ever knew the doctrines of these people...Buck in his dictionary gives a fuill account and I owe that knowledge to Dr. Finley. I said, 'Doctor, my home is called "Bird's Nest." I would like mighty well for you to pay me a visit and come to "Bird's Nest."' Dr. Finley came to see me and I appreciated it so much that I felt honored to have such a Divine come to my house. I had the warmest feeling for Dr. Finley, and he at all times was ready to give me advice, and I got a great deal of counsel from him."

(8) The Rev. Lynford Lardner Moore, M.D., returned medical missionary to China, who was serving Bethany Presbyterian Church near Craigsville, said:

"I met Dr. Finley about two years ago at Presbytery, and it was rather a trying circumstance when he asked me two questions in theology, and I had forgotten all the theology I knew; but I found that I had a friend in Dr. Finley. I have always felt the highest esteem for this man, yet it seems to me that we ought to rejoice that the All-wise took him home to rest. I rejoice that I had the pleasure of knowing him in this Presbytery, in his home and on the street these last two years."

(9) Mr. Samuel Finley Pilson said:

"I have known Dr. Finley better, probably, than anyone in this body. I saw Dr. Finley graduate. He was a man of fine intellect and lovable character. We revere and esteem him. I have known and followed his career. I know that he was a man powerful and lovable. He loved his home; he loved his family. He took great interest in them. Dr. Finley is the type of man to be imitated by any and everybody, and I advise you younger members of this Presbytery to follow Dr. Finley. I should say that they might do it blindfolded, because I never knew him to make a mistake. No man living was more devoted to his kindred and connections than was Dr. Finley. He was conscientious, faithful and true to his duties in every respect."

(10) The Rev. John Adams.Trostle, pastor of Timber Ridge Presbyterian Church in Rockbridge County, had this to say:

"A little incident occurred in Presbytery last fall which it seems to me I should tell the Presbytery. It alludes to Dr. Finley's courtesy and loyalty very clearly and very beautifully. Dr. Finley, we know, was in declining health, not strong. No one would have taken any notice of his absence from the meeting of the Presbytery except to deplore the fact. He desired to leave the meeting for a short while and as I was Moderator he came to me and expressed a desire to leave the house for an hour or so. I don't know that I had ever seen anything like that done before. Dr. Finley was the father, almost, of this Presbytery, and was coming to one of the youngest members of the Presbytery with such a request, to show his loyalty to the Presbytery and his courtesy to the man that the Presbytery honored with the position of Moderator. A more loyal, courteous and conscientious gentleman I have never seen."

(11) The Rev. Clarence Levan Altfather, pastor of Bethel Presbyterian Church near Staunton, added,

"Shortly after I came to the Presbytery Dr. Finley's wonderful liberalness of heart was revealed to me in a very personal way. One of the things to which I refer was a note that he wrote to me on a special occasion, in which there came to my life a peculiar uplifting. That was when I was almost a stranger and I have thought oftentimes what must have been back of that note in that meek heart and that meek soul."

(12) The Rev. B. F. Wilson said,

"I cannot think of Dr. Finley without feeling the vital tenderness of his heart and the inspiration of his life in the welcome which he always gave. It seemed to me that he had a genius for friendship—a friendship that uplifted men's lives and bound them to him.

"The death of Dr. Finley has brought genuine sadness to all of us. A Prince in Israel has fallen; we have lost our most efficient presbyter, our wise counselor—our faithful and loyal friend has entered into his rest.

"He was a rare man, generous in thought and judgment, wonderfully just, of warm heart and high character. To know him was a part of a liberal education, and to share his friendship was indeed a spiritual uplift, for his influence was like a benediction. He was built largely in mind and heart and there was about him a gracious courtliness and courtesy to the humblest as to the greatest.

"I watched him often, trying to find the secret of his power and influence, and it seemed to me as to lie in his winsome Godliness. He was revealing the Master in daily life. There are many godly people who are not winsome, who have not learned the charm of goodness, who have not acquired in character the beauty of holiness that draws men. Dr. Finley possessed this in a wonderful way and to a great degree, and it made him truly magnetic, winning others to Christ.

"He seemed always to do and do easily that most difficult thing of keeping his highest ideals in close and healthy touch with his commonest duties.

"For him to live was Christ and to die was gain. The brave, true soldier of his country, the greater soldier of the Cross, has answered the call of the great Captain of our salvation, and his citizenship is in heaven. As he passes into the heavens we stand like the company of the prophets, wistfully, sorrowfully gazing, as Elijah is taken up, praying like them for a double portion of his spirit to fall upon us."

One of George Finley's granddaughters, Harriet Finley Tynes of Greensboro, NC, wrote in a letter to her first cousin Margaret Irvine White Bear of Richmond, VA, in 1972:

"I recall how fond Grandfather was of us as children, how we liked to see him come in from his hunting in the fields and woodlands, and to play with his beautiful hunting dogs. Mother once told me that Grandpa always overfed his dogs, and his children and everything else that lived near him, because he had suffered so much from hunger as a prisoner of war after the battle of Gettysburg, he could never endure to think that any thing else was hungry. Mother talked a great deal about how Grandpa read to his children when they were young, and how they enjoyed those hours. She mentioned Uncle Remus, Leatherstocking Tales, Scott's novels, Two Little Confederates, etc. He instilled a love of reading in his own children and they passed it on to theirs.

"When I must have been a 'teenager' I once, in speaking to my father [Achilles Lyon Tynes, M. D.], made some remark to the effect that I supposed my grandfather was a rather straight laced pious sort of man whom I would not have liked too well when I was old enough to understand his views. My father took me up immediately and with such feeling and conviction I have never forgotten it. (Grandfather had been dead some years at the time, and I had only dim childish recollections of him.) My father said, 'You couldn't be more mistaken. You would be tremendously proud of him if you knew him now. I have seen only several men in my whole life

who gave me the feeling that they were truly *great* men. Your Grandfather Finley was one of them.' (My father had met Woodrow Wilson on one or more of his infrequent visits to Staunton. I don't know whether he had Wilson in mind or not.) 'From the first time I ever saw him until his death, I was never with him without this feeling that I was in the presence of greatness.' [Dr. Tynes' wife Margaret Elizabeth was the tenth child of Dr. and Mrs. Finley.] Father told me then, or later, and on several occasions, that Grandpa was a very independent man, doing what he considered right regardless of the viewpoint of others. In a day when ministers were not supposed to drink anything alcoholic, he always had whiskey and wine on the sideboard, and Grandma made him his toddy when he came in after a cold outing, or when he wanted it. Grandpa did not think that legislation was the way to handle the matter of temperance, and so stated from his pulpit. He preached temperance, but not total abstinence, nor did he believe it was scriptural."

Dr. A. M. Fraser concluded his retrospective piece on the life, work, and character of his close friend George Finley with these words:

"Three years after Mrs. Finley's death in 1905, Dr. Finley's health also began to fail. With characteristic will power he continued to work and suffer, till he succumbed to an attack of pneumonia in 1909. After ten days of intense pain, which he bore with Christian fortitude and resignation, he passed away, April 23rd, 1909, in the seventy-first year of his age, at the home of his daughter, Mrs. Margaret Tynes [wife of Achilles Lyon Tynes, M.D.] in Staunton. The body was removed to the Tinkling Spring Manse, and for the funeral was taken from the Manse to the church. A procession followed that extended almost from the Manse to the church. The building was crowded with friends, some of them having come from a distance. A detail from the Stonewall Jackson Camp of Confederate Veterans acted as an escort of honor. Among the pall-bearers was Captain Michie [of Albemarle County], the comrade who at Gettysburg had shared his achievement and renown [in crossing the stone wall at Bloody Angle].

"Handsome floral tributes were sent by the Elders and Deacons of the church, by various church societies, and by Mary Baldwin Seminary, with separate ones from the trustees and the faculty and students, by the veterans' camp, and by a great many individuals.

"The services were simple and loving and were conducted by six of his brethren in the Presbytery of Lexington, A. H. Hamilton, B. F. Wilson, A. T. Graham, C. R. Stribling, Holmes Rolston and A. M. Fraser. A large number of other ministers attested their affection and veneration by their presence.

"His body was reverently laid to its rest in the church grave yard, by the side of his wife, the beloved companion and co-laborer for nearly half a century."

The inscription on the four sides of their monument reads:

GEORGE W. FINLEY
BORN
DEC. 1ST, 18838
DIED
APRIL 23RD, 1909
"I KNOW WHOM I HAVE BELIEVED
AND AM PERSUADED THAT HE IS
ABLE TO KEEP THAT WHICH I
HAVE COMMITTED UNTO HIM
AGAINST THAT DAY"

GEORGE W. FINLEY, D.D
PASTOR OF
TINKLING SPRING CHURCH
FROM
FEB. 1892 TO APRIL 1909

DEVOTED HUSBAND AND
FATHER, FAITHFUL MINISTER.
GALLANT CONFEDERATE SOLDIER
THIS MONUMENT IS ERECTED
AS A TRIBUTE OF LOVE AND
ADMIRATION BY HIS FAMILY, CON-
GREGATION, FRIENDS AND COMRADES.

MARGARET ELIZABETH
WIFE OF
GEORGE W. FINLEY
BORN
APRIL 7TH, 1840
DIED
MARCH 29TH, 1905
"HER CHILDREN ARISE UP
AND CALL HER BLESSED"

"LOVELY AND PLEASANT
IN THEIR LIVES, AND IN THEIR
DEATH THEY WERE NOT DI-
VIDED"

I have been privileged to have had an opportunity to live vicariously along my ancestor's remarkable pilgrimage in the preparation of this paper. Such a life cries out not to be forgotten, though I cannot imagine my great-grandfather saying that on his own behalf. As far as being remembered goes, he would simply rest secure in the gracious providence of the God he followed and trusted. *Fortis in arduis* indeed! His life and witness graced the earth, and we who are his descendants, or learn about him, "have a goodly heritage." In the large scale, his life carries an echo of the "Great Reversal" of the Gospel he so faithfully proclaimed: one who could be considered a "loser" turns out to be a great "winner."

Printed works consulted:

Kelly, Balmer, ed.: A General Catalog of Trustees, Officers, Professors, and Students of Union Theological Seminary in Virginia. Richmond, VA: Union Theological Seminary, 1976.

Wilson, Howard McKnight: The Tinkling Spring: Headwater of Freedom. Fishersville, VA: Tinkling Springs and Hermitage Presbyterian Churches, 1954.

Young, William A., Jr., and Patricia C. Young: 56th Virginia Infantry. Lynchburg, VA: H. E. Howard, Inc., 1990.

This version of this work is dated August 25, 2004.